

AMENDMENT 13C TO THE SOUTH ATLANTIC SNAPPER GROUPEL FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

September 2006

What is the purpose of Snapper Grouper Amendment 13C?

- The primary purpose of Amendment 13C is to end overfishing of four key snapper grouper stocks in the South Atlantic: snowy grouper, golden tilefish, vermilion snapper, and black sea bass.
- Also, the amendment proposes to moderately increase the amount of red porgy that can be harvested annually by commercial and recreational fishermen. Because the red porgy stock has been increasing in size since the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) implemented the red porgy rebuilding plan, scientists have advised the Council it is possible to increase the annual harvest of that species without compromising fishery managers' ability to rebuild the stock on schedule.

How do fishery managers evaluate the status of South Atlantic snapper grouper species?

- The status of snapper grouper and other South Atlantic fish stocks is periodically evaluated through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process. The SEDAR process is open to the public, and involves the participation of fishermen, as well as federal and state agency fishery scientists and fishery managers. It consists of three independent, separate, and public workshops: one data workshop, one assessment workshop, and one review workshop in which the Council, NOAA Fisheries Service, state agencies, constituent groups, and the Center for Independent Experts participate.
- The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee also reviews final SEDAR reports and supporting information, and makes a determination supporting or opposing assessment methodologies and findings.
- For more information about the SEDAR process and copies of the SEDAR reports prepared for snowy grouper, golden tilefish, vermilion snapper, and black sea bass, log on to:
<http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/>

When was the status of snowy grouper, golden tilefish, vermilion snapper, and black sea bass last assessed through SEDAR, and what were the assessment results?

- Snowy grouper was last assessed in 2004, and determined to be overfished and undergoing overfishing.
- Golden tilefish was last assessed in 2004, and determined to be undergoing overfishing.
- Vermilion snapper was last assessed in 2003, and determined to be undergoing overfishing.
- Black sea bass was last assessed in 2005, and determined to be overfished and undergoing overfishing.

How were snowy grouper, golden tilefish, vermilion snapper, and black sea bass determined to be experiencing overfishing?

- Scientists determined these four snapper grouper stocks were experiencing overfishing because SEDAR assessment results indicated the mortality rate they experienced from fishing activities exceeded the maximum they could sustain while still producing the largest average catch that can be taken continuously under average environmental conditions.

Did the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee support these determinations?

- The Scientific and Statistical Committee concluded all four SEDAR assessments were based on the best available science.

Based on the most recent stock assessment, what reductions were needed to end overfishing of snowy grouper, golden tilefish, vermilion snapper, and black sea bass?

- A 66% reduction in catch is needed to end overfishing of snowy grouper.
- A 34% reduction in catch is needed to end overfishing of golden tilefish.
- A 31% reduction in catch is needed to end overfishing of vermilion snapper.
- A 62% reduction in catch is needed to end overfishing of black sea bass.

What regulations did the Council propose to accomplish the required reductions?

The Council proposed, and NOAA Fisheries Service implemented, the following species specific regulations for snowy grouper, golden tilefish, vermilion snapper, and black sea bass:

Snowy Grouper

Commercial:

- Reduce the annual quota over a 3-year period from 151,000 pounds gutted weight in 2006 to 84,000 pounds gutted weight in 2008.
- Reduce the trip limit over a 3-year period from 275 pounds gutted weight in 2006 to 100 pounds gutted weight in 2008.

Recreational:

- Limit possession to one per person per day within the 5-grouper per person per day aggregate bag limit.

Golden Tilefish

Commercial:

- Reduce the annual quota to 295,000 pounds gutted weight.
- Reduce the trip limit to 4,000 pounds gutted weight, and further reduce the trip limit to 300 pounds gutted weight if 75% of the quota is taken by September 1.

Recreational:

- Limit possession to one per person per day within the 5-grouper per person per day aggregate bag limit.

Vermilion Snapper

Commercial:

- Establish an annual quota of 1,100,000 pounds gutted weight.
- Maintain the current 12-inch total length minimum size limit.

Recreational:

- Increase the minimum size limit from 11-inches total length to 12-inches total length.
- Maintain the current bag limit of 10 fish per person per day.

Black Sea Bass

Commercial:

- Establish an annual quota, which will be reduced from 477,000 pounds gutted weight in 2006 to 309,000 pounds gutted weight in 2008.
- Maintain the current 10-inch minimum size limit.
- Require the use of at least 2-inch mesh for the entire back panel of pot gear.
- Require pots be removed from the water after the annual quota is met.
- Change the fishing year from the calendar year to June 1 through May 31.

Recreational:

- Establish an allocation, which will be reduced from 633,000 pounds gutted weight in 2006 to 409,000 pounds gutted weight in 2008.
- Change the fishing year from the calendar year to June 1 through May 31.
- Increase the minimum size limit from 10-inches total length to 12-inches total length over a 2-year period.
- Reduce the bag limit from 20 to 15 fish per person per day.

What are the new red porgy regulations?

Red Porgy

Commercial:

- Establish an annual quota of 127,000 pounds gutted weight.
- Maintain the current rule limiting the sale, purchase, and possession of red porgy to one fish per person per day or per trip (whichever is more restrictive) from January through April.
- Increase the trip limit to 210 pounds gutted weight during May through December.
- Maintain the current 14-inch total length minimum size limit.

Recreational:

- Increase the bag limit to three fish per person per day.
- Maintain the current 14-inch total length minimum size limit.

How can I get more information on this amendment?

Federal Register Notice

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/pdf/06-7940.pdf>

Fishery Bulletin

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pubann/pa06/pdfs/FB06-040.pdf>